Paul Polansky says the number may
be as high as 125,000.

According to Polansky, some 14,000 Romani homes have been burned,
including the deliberate destruction by
arson of the Romani quarters in Pristina, Mitrovica and Pec. Murder, rape and
beatings continue as part of the policy
of "ethnic cleansing" being carried out by elements of the KLR.

Among the more recent attacks on Roma is that of 20 February,
2001, when UNMIK police reported four armed
men entered the home of a Romani family in Djakovica and demanded money with
menaces and damaged a car. On
14 February the body of a Rom was found on the road at Liplja. On 13 February,
a firebomb attack was made on a Romani
home in the same area, destroying one room.

At Suva Reka, on 12 February, a hand grenade was thrown into the
backyard of a Romani house.

Such harassment continues and incidents are being varified and
logged each week by the Council for
the Defence of Human Rights and Freedoms in Pristina.

Whilst it is the policy of the International Romani Union to
insist, against KLR opposition, that Roma have
a right to return to the province and receive aid in rebuilding destroyed
homes, the fact of the matter is that it is
not safe to do so. We have been told frankly by the OSCE that security cannot
be guaranteed for Roma attempting
to return.

This point is well emphasized by the recent attack on a bus
carrying passengers from Serbia into
Kosovo. Also, the Roma refugees residing in Macedonia, including those in the
Romani township of Sutka near
Skopje, although only a few miles in some cases from their former homes in
Uresovec, are simply too frightened
to even go and take a look.

I therefore appeal to those hearing applications for asylum
or refugee status by Roma from Kosovo
to consider the situation carefully. Please bear in mind that if refused, they
would be returning to a province where
they are not just unwelcome but where an active policy of "ethnic cleansing"
is still being carried out, despite the
presence of NATO and the UN.